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The following notification issued by the Government of India explaining their policy in dealing with the Civil Disobedience Movement is published for general information.

By Order,

N. MADHAVA RAO,
Chief Secretary to Government.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

HOME DEPARTMENT.

NOTIFICATION.

POLITICAL.

New Delhi, the 4th January 1932.

No. F-33/XXIV/31-Political.—The following Statement by the Governor-General in Council is published for general information :—

STATEMENT.

The Government of India desire at the present crisis to place before the public the issues raised by the attitude of Congress and their declared intention to launch a general campaign of civil disobedience. It is the policy of His Majesty's Government and the Government of India to secure, in the framing of a constitution for India, the maximum co-operation and agreement of all parties and interests in England and in India, and it was with this object that the procedure by Conference was adopted. In December 1929 the Congress deliberately rejected this method in favour of the barren road of no-co-operation, and a few months later they initiated the campaign of civil disobedience. The consequent loss of life and property and the damage caused to business and trade, are fresh in the memory of the public. The movement continued until the beginning of March 1931, by which time, owing partly to the measures taken to meet it and partly to the steadily decreasing support of the public, it had ceased to be a cause of anxiety to Government. In the meantime, the Prime Minister had made his declaration of the 19th of January 1931, and the Government of India, with the approval of His Majesty's Government, decided to make a further effort to secure the co-operation of the Congress in bringing to fruition the policy which he had announced. The result was the Delhi Settlement of March 5, 1931. The primary object of that Settlement was to give to Congress the opportunity of participation in the further discussions of the Round Table Conference, and through the anxious months that followed the Government of India kept that purpose steadfastly in view. They and the local Governments scrupulously observed the terms of the Settlement, and spared no effort to surmount the difficulties which the activities of Congress continuously placed in the way of the establishment of peaceful conditions. Some of those difficulties have been described in the statements issued by the Government of the United Provinces, on the 14th December 1931 and by the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province on the 24th and 30th of December 1931, but they were not confined to those provinces. They were evident in varying degrees in every province and the Government of India have on record many instances of specific breaches of the Delhi Settlement. It is, however, more to the general trend of Congress policy than to individual cases that they now wish to refer. Within a few days of the Delhi Settlement, two features became manifest, and have since been continuously in evidence. The first was the organised attempt to utilise the Settlement as a means of preparation for a further conflict. The second was the exploitation of the Settlement for the purpose of adding to the prestige of Congress, and of securing for them and its members a position of privilege, not enjoyed by any other organization or by members of the general public. Preparations for a renewal of civil disobedience have been openly carried on. Their excuse has been the assumed futility of the Round Table Conference and the bad faith of British statesmen. Allegations to this effect have continuously been made by the Congress press and by responsible Congress leaders. There has been no disposition to await events or to show a spirit of confidence without which true co-operation was impossible. Behind the screen of distrust so created, the Congress have conducted preparations for a new campaign. They have laid particular stress on the consolidation of their position in rural areas, and in every province they have missed no opportunity to exploit the economic situation for that

purpose. They have extended their volunteer organizations, and in the North-West Frontier Province they raised through Abdul Ghaffar Khan (who was recognised by the All-India Congress Committee as the leader of the Congress movement in that province) a very large body of men who were trained in expectation of a struggle with Government. The dangers of this "war mentality" were evident to Government, and Congress could not have been ignorant of them. They were, in fact, brought to the notice of Mr. Gandhi on several occasions, and, in particular, the menace to the Delhi Settlement, involved in the Red Shirt movement in the North-West Frontier Province and the agrarian agitation in the United Provinces, were strongly represented to him. While the Round Table Conference was still in session, a no-rent campaign was started in the United Provinces. A little later, preparations for a conflict in the North-West Frontier Province were so intensified as to create a situation of grave danger, to meet which Government were compelled to abandon the policy of forbearance which they had hitherto pursued.

The exploitation of the Settlement for the purpose of securing to the Congress a privileged position has taken various forms. During the months that followed the Delhi Settlement, the Government of India had persistently to contest claims, the acceptance of which would have involved one or other of the following consequences:—

- (a) Fettering their own discretion and that of local Governments in the discharge of their responsibilities for the maintenance of law and order.
- (b) Placing members of the Congress who offended against the law in a favourable position in comparison with other members of the public in similar circumstances.
- (c) The recognition of Congress as a body whose advice must be accepted in matters relating to land revenue and rent.
- (d) Generally, the acceptance of the principle that the Settlement of March 5th, gave to Congress a status which entitled it to more favourable treatment than is accorded by Government to any other association—political or otherwise, and constituted it an intermediary between the Government and the people.

Side by side with this intervention in the administration of the country, the Congress have in various ways interfered with private liberty and the freedom of trade. Under the guise of peaceful persuasion, they have employed the methods of intimidation and coercion to impose on individuals and concerns an intolerable system of tyranny.

2. In their determination to assist towards the peaceful solution of constitutional problems, the Government of India showed deliberate forbearance towards Congress activities. They refrained from denouncing the Delhi Settlement, although justification for such a course was given on many occasions, and they persisted with success in their endeavours to obtain a *modus vivendi* which would enable Mr. Gandhi to attend the Round Table Conference. In the Statement delivered on the 1st of December last, the Prime Minister renewed the pledges he had given in the previous January. In one direction he made an important advance. He gave an assurance that, with due regard to the necessary requirements of the Frontier, the North-West Frontier Province would be constituted a Governor's Province of the same status as other Governors' Provinces, and he further announced that, pending the introduction of the new constitution in other provinces, necessary steps would be taken, as soon as may be, to apply to the Province the provisions of the present Government of India Act relating to Governors' Provinces. This declaration was made with the full support of the Government of India and is an earnest of the good faith with which they have approached and will continue to approach the question of constitutional advance. A few days after the declaration of the Prime Minister, Parliament by an overwhelming majority accepted the policy which the National Government had announced. Among other commitments, was the undertaking to expedite the scheme of constitutional advance, and to this end to set up various Committees to deal with specific aspects of the problem. In pursuance of this pledge, the Committees are now in course of constitution and the representatives of British parties will sail for India on January 15th. The Government of India, on their part, are doing all that is possible to push forward the work. In particular, they are taking steps which, they believe, will secure for the North-West Frontier Province within a few months the present status of a Governor's Province.

3. The position when Mr. Gandhi returned to India was thus briefly as follows:—His Majesty's Government and Parliament were committed to a scheme of constitutional reform which had been accepted as reasonable by the great majority of Delegates to the Round Table Conference. They had further given an undertaking that they would make every effort to overcome as quickly as possible the practical difficulties in the way of its immediate realisation and, in pursuance of this, they had set up the machinery by which some of those difficulties can be solved. The Government of India were pledged to assist and expedite the work by all means in their power. Mr. Gandhi had given no clear indication of whether he or the Congress, whom he represented, were willing to co-operate in the fulfilment of the

scheme of His Majesty's Government. In the meantime, Congress had precipitated a conflict with Government in the United Provinces and in the North-West Frontier Province, and proposals had been initiated to start a campaign elsewhere for the boycott of British goods and institutions. The main issue before Government was whether Congress were prepared or not to co-operate in further constitutional discussions; and it was essential to ascertain their attitude and that of Mr. Gandhi towards this fundamental question. It was plain that there could be no co-operation in any accepted sense of the term so long as activities in the United Provinces and the North-West Frontier Province continued. It was also clear that there could be no co-operation under a continuous menace of the renewal of civil disobedience. The telegram of Mr. Gandhi of the 1st of January and the resolutions of the Working Committee of Congress passed under his advice have left no doubt on this issue. Under the specific threat of a general renewal of civil disobedience, the programme of which has been announced, the Government of India have been asked to accept conditions which would make Mr. Gandhi the arbiter of measures necessary for the maintenance of law and order, and which would leave Congress free to pursue their subversive activities as seemed fit to them. The measure of the co-operation which Congress would extend in return for the acceptance of these conditions is indicated by the announcement of the Working Committee. They have pronounced the declaration of the Prime Minister to be wholly unsatisfactory and inadequate in terms of the Congress demands, and they have demanded that if their co-operation be accepted, free scope be given to them to prosecute their claim to complete independence. There was clearly no alternative left to the Government of India but to reject these demands and to take all measures that were necessary to meet the campaign of civil disobedience.

4. Mr. Gandhi has stated as part of his creed that civil disobedience is not only the natural right of the people, especially when they have no effective voice in their own Government, but that it is also an effective substitute for violence or armed rebellion. Experience has proved time and again that in this country civil disobedience cannot be carried on without violence and Mr. Gandhi himself has spoken of the sacrifice of a million lives. The civil disobedience as conceived and as practiced by Congress is to paralyse the administration, and to inflict the maximum of harm on Government, regardless of the loss it may entail to private individuals. It is opposed to all constitutional principles and if it achieved its object, it would make any form of Government impossible. In using their full resources against it the Government of India are, therefore, fighting the battle, not only of the present Government, but of the governments of the future. It is particularly incumbent upon them at the present juncture to oppose with their full power a movement which would make constitutional advance impossible. It is their duty to hand over to the new order a working administration, and to this end to resist, with all their might, forces which would create a state of anarchy and chaos. The peaceful progress of India depends on the maintenance of the authority of Government and of respect for the law whatever that Government may be, and the present Government of India would fail lamentably in their obligations to their successors if, during a period of transition, they allowed this fundamental principle to go by default, or were content to permit the usurpation of their functions by any political organization.

An issue of hardly less importance is whether a political organization is to be allowed by lawless means to impose its will on the public, large sections of which deny its authority and oppose its pretensions. Government would fail in their duty were they to countenance the claims of Congress to control and domination, or permit them, in effect, to assume the position of a parallel government.

5. The issues before the country are plain. On the one side, there is a body to which has twice been offered an opportunity, without precedent, of assisting towards the political advancement of the country. It has twice rejected the offer and has twice chosen to follow the path of destruction rather than of constructive effort. It is determined to inflict untold harm on the country in the pursuit of a position of domination which whole classes of the people will not accept. It persists in methods which, if successful, would uproot the foundations of all government, and would render impossible any system of orderly administration now and in the future.

On the other side, there is the opportunity of co-operation in the great work of constitutional reform to which His Majesty's Government and Parliament are pledged. The Government of India are equally pledged to press forward the work, and this they will do undeterred by the threats of Congress. While they will take every measure that is necessary for the suppression of a lawless movement and for the protection of public and private liberty they will also spare no effort to bring to completion the policy of His Majesty's Government.

In this task they appeal for the co-operation of all who have at heart the peace and happiness of the people of India and who, rejecting the methods of revolution, desire to follow to its certain goal the path of constitutional advance.

H. W. EMERSON,
Secretary to the Government
of India.